

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, June 20. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**hat is Individuation? Or, where-
in consist the Individuability of a
thing?

Ans. 'Twere an easie matter in the Resolution of this Question to mount the Argument above the Heads of most Readers, though hard, if not impossible, to manage it so that all may understand it. 'Tis we must confess of a very Nice and Difficult Nature, and is acknowledged such even by Mr. Boyle, in some Discourses of his, if we mistake not, concerning the Resurrection — and if such deep Searchers into Philosophy are not fully resolv'd therein, 'twill be no shame for us to come short of giving an entire satisfaction. Something however must be said thereon, nor are we willing to puzzle the Cause with telling the World — Individuation is — The Unity of a thing with it self, or that whereby any thing is what it is, which makes it little, if any thing clearer than 'twas before. It mayn't therefore be improper to run through the different Orders of visible Beings, and search 'em all for some distinct Idea thereof. To begin with those Species of Body which are not properly Organiz'd, which have neither Life nor Sense, or Stones, Metals, &c. In these Individuation seems to consist in nothing but greater or lesser; take the less part of a Stone away, you may still call it the same Stone; take an equal part with the remains, that Individuation ceases, and they are two new Individuals. Divide a Stone, &c. as long as you please, every part of it will be a Stone still, another individual Stone, as much as any in the Mountain or Quarry 'twas first cut out of, even tho' reduced to the minutest Sand, or if possible a thousand times less. But when we take one step further, and proceed a Degree higher to the Vegetable Kingdom, the Case is far otherwise, and indeed Nature seems to be still more distinct, and as it were careful in its Individuation the higher it rises, till at last it brings us to that great Transcendental Individual — the only proper uncompoundd Essence — the One God, blessed for ever. To return to Plants — their Individuation consists in that singular Form, Contexture and Order of their Parts, whereby they are disposed for those Uses to which Nature has design'd 'em, and by which they receive and maintain their Beings: — for Example in a Tree — from whence tho' you take the Branches, it grows, receives nourishment from the Earth, maintains it self, and is still a Tree, which the Parts thereof are not, when separated from the rest; for we can't say every part of a Tree is a Tree, as we can every part of a Stone is still a Stone; But now if this Tree be cloven in two, or more pieces, or fell'd by the Roots, this Contexture and Orderly respect of the Parts each to other, ceases: Its Essence as a Tree is destroy'd, its Individuation perishes, and 'tis no more a Tree but a Stump, or a piece or pieces of Timber. Let's proceed a Degree higher, to merely sensible Creatures, who are not so immediately depending on Earth, the common Mother, as the Plants, nor rooted to it, and as it were a part of it as they are, but walk about, have in respect of that an independent Existence, and are a sort of Worlds by themselves: And here the Individuation consist in such a particular Contexture of their Essential Parts, and their relation one towards another, as enables 'em to exert the Operations of the sensible or animal Life: Thus cut off the Legs, or any other parts of an Animal, 'tis the same Animal still, but cut off its Head, or take away its Life, and 'tis no longer that Individual Animal, but a meer Carcass, and will by degrees resolve into common Matter again, or rather be Transmigrated into some other Form. To ascend now to the highest Rank of visible Beings, The Rational: The Individuation of Man appears to us to consist in the Union of that thinking Substance, which we call the rational Soul, with any convenient Portion of fitly Organiz'd Matter. We hope 'tis no Hereſie to assert that any Portion of Matter duly qualified, and united to the Soul by such a Union as we

experience, tho' we can't well explain, is immediately individuated by it, and together with that Soul makes a Man, so that if 'twere possible for one Soul to be cloath'd over and over at different times with all the Matter in the Universe, it wou'd in all those distinct shapes be the same Individual Man: Nor can a Man be supposed in this Case to differ more from himself than he does when he's an Infant, or just past an Embryo, from himself when of adult or decrepid Age, he having during that time chang'd his Portion of Matter over and over; has been Fat and Lean, Sick and Well, lost by Bleeding, Excrement, Perspiration, &c. gain'd again by Aliment, and perhaps not one Particle, or but very few of the first Matter which he took from his Parents and brought with him into the World, now remaining. — And thus much by way of Essay towards the Resolution of this Noble Question.

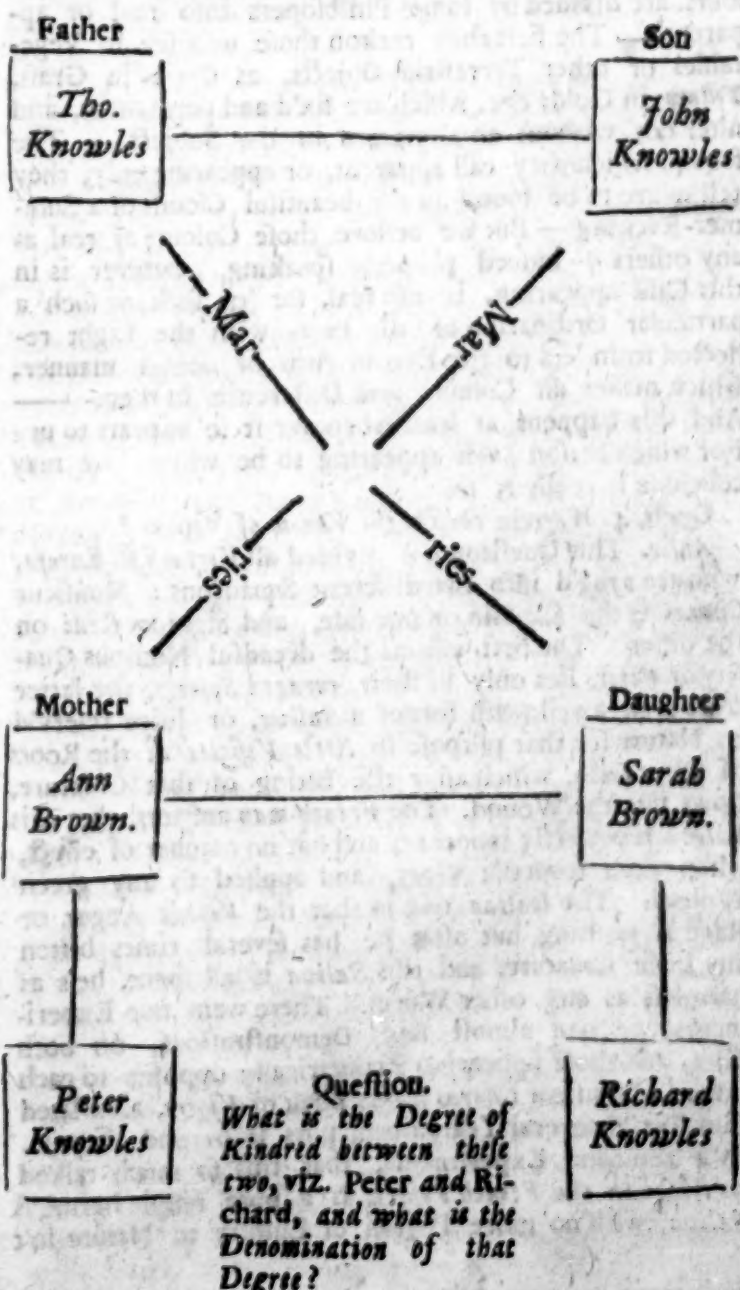
Quest. 2. Thomas Knowles a Widower, has a Son named John Knowles, a Bachelor.

Ann Brown a Widow has a Daughter, named Sarah Brown, a Spinster.

Thomas Knowles the Father } And has by her } Richard.
intermarries with } one Son named }
Sarah Brown the Daughter,

John Knowles the Son } And has by her } Peter.
intermarries with } one Son named }
Ann Brown the Mother,

Or, For the better understanding the Question, take the following Scheme.



Ans. We meet not with any such Instances in Tables of Affinity, nor have we a Denomination particularly for such

Such a Relation: It comes nearest to that of *Cousins of the first Blood*, the relation of a Father and a Son being nearest to that of two Brothers, as also a Mother and a Daughter to two Sisters, and consequently their Issue nearest to the Relation of Brothers and Sisters Children.— This is an odd sort of an Inverted Affinity, for the Son is hereby made Father to his own Father, and his Mother-in-Law and the Daughter is made a Mother to her own Mother and Father-in-Law. — If the Question had been continued, *Whether the Mother or Daughter ought to take place?* We had Answer'd, The Law of God and Nature must certainly subject the Child to its Parent, notwithstanding any *superinduc'd Civil Law*, or Law of Marriage, which in this Case is yet more obliging than any we have yet met with; for the Woman always loses her Name, and is more properly married into the Man than the Man into her, (Woman being made for Man) so that perhaps not improperly according to this *last Law*, we may conclude, that both Mother and Daughter having lost their Names, and Naturaliz'd into New Stocks, they must according to the Civil Law reckon their Preheminence from the Stocks into which they are ingrafted; but the Daughter having married the Father, who is to be prefer'd to the Son, she upon the aforesaid Reasons must take place of her Mother, or her Husband loses his place — But we mention not this to encourage *Undutifulness*, which the Law of God will not dispense with, altho' even in such an Inversion it will dispense with the aforesaid unnatural Order in *Civil Preheminence*, which without a due discretion, may be an unhappy Novel of Temptation.

Quest. 3. *Whether Snow is white or black?*

Ans. Perhaps neither, but like the *Crystalline Humour*, without any real Colour and receptive of all; thus bring any real Object near it, we may perceive a red Cast thereon, and so of Blew, Green, &c. Nay, we have a strange Account in the Transactions of the Royal Society, of Snow which fell near *Genova in Italy*, first white as usual, then red upon the white, and the liquor press'd and melted out of it was of the same Colour. But to speak truth, this seems only accidental, and we have as great Evidence that Snow is white, as that Paper, Chalk, Milk, or any thing else is so; namely, the Testimony of our Senses. We are not ignorant that Colours are divided by some Philosophers into real or apparent.— The first they reckon those we see in Vegetables or other Terrestrial Objects, as *Green* in Grass, *Yellow* in Gold; &c. which are fix'd and permanent, and alter not without an alteration in the Subject.— The second which they call apparent, or appearing only, they tell us are to be found in the beautiful Clouds of a Summer-Evening.— But we believe those Colours as real as any others.— Indeed properly speaking, whatever is in this Case appearing, is also real, for 'tis such or such a particular Ordination of the Parts with the Light reflected from 'em to the Eye in such or such a manner, which makes all Colours and Difference in them.— And this happens at least whenever it so appears to us: For which reason Snow appearing to be white, we may conclude it really is so.

Quest. 4. *Wherein consists the Venom of Vipers?*

Ans. This Question has divided all *Virtuosi* in Europe, who are rang'd into two different Squadrons: Monsieur Charas is the Captain on one side, and Signior Redi on the other. The first affirms the dreadful Noxious Quality of Vipers lies only in their *enraged Spirits*, the latter fixes it in a yellowish sort of a Saliva, or Juice reserv'd by Nature for that purpose in little Vesicles at the Roots of their Teeth, which after the Biting of that Creature, flows into the Wound. The French-man answers, that this Saliva is perfectly innocent, and has no manner of effect, when taken from the Viper, and applied to any green Wound. The Italian tells us that the Viper's Anger or Rage is nothing but after he has several times bitten any little Creature, and this Saliva is all spent, he's as harmless as any other Worm. There want not Experiments, we had almost said Demonstrations, on both sides, and those appearing Diametrically opposite to each other. Monsieur Charas in his Book of Vipers, translated into English several Years since, puts it beyond Dispute, by a thousand Experiments, that this so much talk'd of Juice in the French Vipers, is a pure simple harmless Saliva, with no more Poyson or Enmity to Nature in't

than that of a Man. And on t'other side, Signior Redi and the Italian Virtuosi have not only prov'd the contrary, by many repeated Tryals, related in a Book publish'd in Latin under his Name, but also made the Experiment before some English Gentleman, on several little Creatures, Kittlings, Chickens, &c. who having some slight Incisions or Punctures made in the fleshy Parts of their Bodies, and some of this yellow Juice convey'd therein, fell dead in a short time with the most horrid Convulsions,—others who were bitten by the Vipers enraged to the uttermost, after this Venom exhausted, receiv'd thereby no Injury in the World.— (vid. *Transactions of the Royal Society*.) The Difficulty is how to reconcile all these seeming Contradictions, which we don't apprehend can be any way done but by Trimming betwixt both; and since we can't with any modesty deny the matter of fact on either side, acknowledging that the Italian Vipers Poison does really consist in this yellow Juice (as we are inform'd the *Battle Snakes* also does) but that the French Vipers is something finer, and either to be plac'd in their *enraged Spirits*, or something else not yet discovered.

Quest. 5. *Is it true, that a Lyon won't prey on a pure Virgin?*

Ans. As true as that the same noble Creature is afraid of a Cock, as the ancient Naturalists report—whereas very late Experience tells us, they are so far from being afraid of 'em, that they have broken into the Apartment of the Poultry, (if we mistake not at *Dresden*) and made a hearty Meal upon them, making no difference betwixt Cocks and Hens. In the mean time we deny not that such a thing may have happened, viz. that a Lyon may have spared a Virgin; for Historians tell us, they'll not willingly set upon any thing that's humane, unless provok'd with Hunger, and sooner on a *Man*, than a *Child* or *woman*. We our selves have been present at the Tower, when a Woman with Child has been there to see the Lyons, who immediately on her Entry have made a hideous roaring, but whether from some secret Antipathy or meer Chance, 'twould be very rash from one single Instance to determine. On the whole, as we believe there can be no graver Historian brought to assert the Truth of Matter of Fact in the present Case, than the *Seven Champions*, or *Valentine and Orson*, so we may without being uncharitable, firmly believe that very few of our English Virgins wou'd be willing to try the Experiment.

Quest. 6. *Why looking against the Sun causes Sneezing?*

Ans. It holds not universally, for some Persons may look on the Sun till their Eyes are out, without finding any inclination to Sneeze on their so doing.— However in others it does certainly hold, and that perhaps in the most part of Men. The most probable account to be given thereof, seems to be this—the liquid Substance contain'd in the parts adjoining to the *Processus Mamillares*, receive by being thus turn'd toward the Sun, a sudden Rarefaction; as Water when brought near the Fire, and Air when the Hand or any other warmth applied to the Thermometer. From this Fermentation arise infinite small Sparks or Spirits, much at the same rate (to use a gross Comparison) as the Atoms in Bottl'd-Ale, which flies hither and thither, strike on the Parts near 'em, and by the brisk Motion they make thereon, produce much the same Effect with Sneezing-Powder, or any light thing thrust up in the Nostrils.

Advertisements.

Pray forbear sending any more Questions, till we give further Orders for it, we having many already upon our Hands, which will speedily be Answer'd, and then publick Notice shall be given thereof to the World.

Our Querists may expect in next Tuesday's Mercury that exact and full Account of our whole ATHENIAN PROJECT, which was to have been added here, (according to our Promise) had there been room enough.